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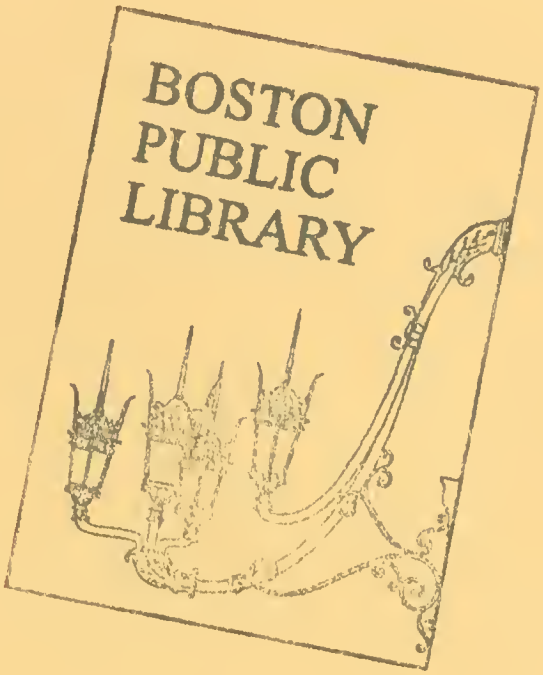

MATTAPAN STUDY

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MATTAPAN STUDY

Prepared by:

Planning Department

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M A T T A P A N S T U D Y

I. BACKGROUND

A special study of the Mattapan area prior to the Dorchester District Planning Study has been undertaken for the following reasons:

A. Expressed community interest (Rabbi Korff, others) indicates that the area is in a period of change and something must be done to provide for a good balanced community.

B. A significant number of Jewish families are outmigrating from Mattapan. Much of this outmigration is due to a feeling that Mattapan is changing rapidly in such areas as housing and commercial deterioration, rapid immigration of large, low-income black families, increase of teenage delinquency particularly on Blue Hill Avenue and at Lewenberg Junior High School and other social problems.

C. Large areas of city-owned as well as privately owned land exists in the area, much of which is suitable for development.

II. PURPOSES OF STUDY

The major purpose of this study is to determine what can be done on immediate, intermediate and long-range basis to stabilize and improve the Mattapan community.

II. DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

A. General Description

1. Location

Although this report is directed primarily to making recommendations in a section of Mattapan only, reference is made to a larger area including the Franklin Field neighborhood adjacent to and north of Mattapan. The Franklin Field area has been experiencing most of the changes which are expected in Mattapan in the near future. Both areas of concern are indicated on Map I.

2. Population

In 1965, the population of Mattapan was 17,300. This figure indicates a significant decrease from 1960 when the population was 19,800 and was also below the 1950 population of 18,700. Thus, the outmigration of families from Mattapan is clearly documented. As mentioned previously, the ethnic composition is changing with the movement into the area, particularly in the northern neighborhoods. In

2. Population cont.

1965, a decrease from 13,300 in 1960 and from 16,500 in 1950.

3. Migration Patterns

Negro migration into Dorchester is clearly evident and future migration is expected to continue, particularly towards Mattapan. The eastern side of Franklin Park and Lower Dorchester are expected to record the main thrust. In 1950, 742 Negroes were in Dorchester. In 1960, 1,061 Negroes were in Dorchester. No other area of the City had a comparable increase during that period. In addition, Negro migration shows a clear tendency to avoid Irish, Itlaian and Canadian areas; therefore, migration can be expected to push further down into Mattapan following the Jewish population.

4. Social Problems

Local newspapers, the little city hall manager and a few residents of Mattapan indicate that most of the problems in Mattapan are primarily psychological and not only physical. The increased use of drugs by teenagers, the discipline problem at once highly regarded Lewenberg Junior High, the molesting and purse-snatching along Blue Hill Avenue, block busting and the rapid increase of large, low-income Negro families in the area have been mentioned most regularly. These problems have caused "fear" in long-time residents and old persons as well as young families moving out of the area. A primary indication of this latter trend is the decreasing white enrollment at Lewenberg and decreasing white membership in local synagogues.

5. Housing Stock and Conditions

In 1960, Mattapan had over 5,600 housing units of which 94% were considered in sound condition by the U. S. Census. In Franklin Field, 5,000 housing units existed in the same year, of which 89% were in sound condition. Since then, housing deterioration has increased considerably, particularly in blocks north of Morton Street with the worst conditions located near the Midland Division Railroad tracks in the vicinity of Talbot Avenue. In addition, spotty deterioration occurs south of Morton Street but generally in blocks close to Blue Hill Avenue (See Map II).

6. Commercial Deterioration and Vacancies

Blue Hill Avenue in the Mattapan-Franklin Field area is characterized by one-story strip commercial development which shows signs of deterioration as well as many vacancies, particularly along Blue Hill Avenue between Morton Street and Franklin Field Playground. The deteriorated appearance is caused in part by a lack of proper maintenance. However, the proliferation of signs in this area and the boarded up vacant storefronts add to the deteriorated appearance of the strip. Many of the boarded up stores are a result of minor civil disturbances which occured in the area during 1968.

The number of vacancies have increased because of the many small merchants having gone out of business primarily because of the loss of local customers due to population change. In addition, merchants are reluctant to rehabilitate existing shops or open new ones because of the fear of future civil disturbances in the general area.

A special study of Blue Hill Avenue, particularly with a view toward determining the location of damaged properties due to rioting in the last two years has just been completed by the Planning Department.

7. Schools

Schools in Mattapan are generally poor in condition, located on small sites and are experiencing large increases in non-white enrollment, particularly in the Lewenberg Junior High School and the Wolcott Elementary School. All of the schools, except the Lewenberg, were recommended for abandonment in 1962 by the Sargent Report on Boston Schools which was prepared by Harvard University for the Boston Redevelopment Authority (See Map III).

A table showing the selected school statistics follows:

SCHOOLS (North to South)	GRADE	YR. BUILT	GENERAL CONDITION	ENROLLMENT			CAPACITY
				WHITE	NON-WHITE	TOTAL	
Lewenberg JHS	7-9	1930	Good	463	480	943	1,060
Wolcott	special 3-6	1901	Poor	184	272	456	330
Logue	special K, 3-6	1924	Poor	297	63	360	265
Baker	1-2	1913	Poor	73	18	91	100
Mason	K-3	1922	Poor	113	1	114	130
Tileston	K-6	1911	Fair	277	68	345	490
TOTALS:				1,407	902	2,309	2,315

Source: Public Facilities Department figures for January, 1969

8. Parks

Mattapan playgrounds are in good condition in comparison with other Boston public open spaces. The 18-acre Almont Street Playground and the 6-acre Walker Playground are the only two playgrounds serving Mattapan, but they provide a variety of facilities such as tennis courts, playfields, tot lots and sitting areas. However, no small sitting parks are located in the commercial areas along Blue Hill Avenue, and few, if any, indoor facilities exist for teenagers and older citizens (See Map III).

B. Vacant Land Areas

1. Mattapan Urban Renewal Project Area (See Map IV)

a. Size

40+ acres (including approximately 10 acres of "paper" or unimproved streets)

b. Property Information Table:

Owner	Square Feet	Acres	Assessment Land	Assessment Building	Assessment Total
C.O.B.	588,556	13.5	24,800	25,000	49,800
Private	767,430	17.6	39,100	56,600	95,700
	1,355,986	31.1	63,900	81,600	145,500

Source: Assessors' Records, 1969.

c. Estimated Acquisition Cost

$550,000 (Source: Bob McGovern - extremely rough estimate based on "windshield" appraisal)

d. Structures

Approximately 25 structures are located in this predominantly vacant area including at least 19 houses, one public school and an excavating business. Almost all of the houses are occupied and in fair condition. The school is in poor condition, but is still used.

e. Topography Problems

The terrian is generally flat, but includes extensive rock outcroppings throughout the whole area. Evidence of swampy conditions occurs in the northern portion of the site. Extensive bulldozing and draining or filling of the swampy areas will be necessary for development. Finally, the area is heavily wooded and has a generally abandoned and derelict appearance.

f. Streets, Utilities

As indicated before, all of the streets are unimproved or "paper" streets. Only Livermore Street is "semi-improved."

The area is served with sanitary sewers and water lines. Only one storm sewer is located on Croydon Street and is one block in length.

g. Recent Developments

Interest in developing some of the privately owned parcels has become evident. Mr. Thomas, Geraghty of Ambassador Realty Trust received a variance in October, 1967, to build 64 apartment units in a single family zone at 110 Livermore Street. However, no construction was started. Currently, Mr. Geraghty has submitted a petition to the Zoning Board of Appeal for another variance to build 48 more units on parcels adjoining the above site. This more recent submission is currently being reviewed by the Planning Department. The total site is less than two acres in size and is planned to accommodate 112 units. In addition, Ambassador Realty owns a few more parcels of land in this area and claims to have "options" on several others. The quality and density of development Geraghty is proposing is not particularly appropriate or desirable for this area. The density is too high and the siting is very poor. If variances are granted for this type of development, a haphazard development of the total 40 acres will occur.

Finally, the only other physical development occuring in this area is the construction of a 10" (diameter) sewer line along Canaan Street between Alabama Street and Colorado Street to join existing sewer lines.

h. Lowell Mason School

This small wood frame school [illegible] in Highway between Hebron Street and [illegible] replaced by a new facility according to th[illegible].

h. cont.

Baker and Logue Schools, which are also to be replaced.

i. Former Mattapan Urban Renewal Project

Interest in this site was first shown by the Boston Housing Authority in 1952 and later in 1962 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority for a possible renewal project. Preliminary planning funding was granted in 1963 by the federal government and later an urban renewal application was prepared in 1964. However, the project was dropped by the Authority in 1966. Lack of continued city interest and some community opposition have been cited as reasons for dropping the 42½ acre renewal project plan. The plan proposed 400 units of moderate income housing and a 5½ acre park.

j. Development Possibilities

Two major uses for this area should be considered carefully:

1. A residential community including a 1000-pupil elementary school and a park.

2. A large "educational park complex" including the above elementary school but also a middle school (grades 6-8) and a high school (grades 9-12).

Residential Community

A moderate density family-oriented residential community including 500 units of housing and a nine-acre school-park is proposed. The overall net density would be 21.7 units per acre excluding the school park site or 15.6 units per net acre including the school-park site. The following indicates the number of acres for each use and type of housing:

15 acres	apartments (463
3 acres	row houses (units
5 acres	single family - 37 units
9 acres	school-park
10 acres	streets
42 acres	

The total development would accommodate about 1800 persons. Development at this density is higher than adjoining neighborhoods, but structural types could be arranged to be compatible with

surroundings. However, overall development at an even higher density could be appropriate here if the highest density structures were appropriately located to not conflict with the predominant existing single family neighborhood. No retail commercial space should be provided here as Mattapan Square is nearby and could easily accommodate the increase in business. In addition, industrial development here would be inappropriate.

Educational Park

An educational park including a large high school, middle school and elementary school may be appropriately located on the 40+ acre site. Such large sites are infrequently found in Boston. For example, the Campus High School site in Roxbury is 35 acres in size but had to be obtained via extensive clearance through urban renewal. A new "Campus High" and ancillary facilities located in this area may well serve the changing population composition of the Mattapan-South Dorchester area as well as growing areas of West Roxbury, Hyde Park and Roslindale. The site is well located between an existing rapid transit station (Mattapan Square) and a station planned along the proposed Southwest Expressway rapid transit extension, thus access to the site would be excellent from all parts of the City. In addition, such a large new facility could aid to racially balance schools in the City as it could be a city-wide facility

Although this recommendation is long-range, the Public Facilities Department feels the proposal has merit and should be investigated more fully.

2. Savannah Street - Orlando Street Area (See Map IV & V)

a. Size: 6.1 acres of vacant land exist in four separate locations but all within a few feet of each other, including "paper" or unimproved streets. For purposes of this report, the four areas are identified as follows:

Savannah Street	4.37 acres
Orlando Street 1	0.35 acres
Orlando Street 2	0.65 acres
3 Infill sites	0.73 acres
	6.10 acres

b. Property Information Table:

Area Identification	Owner	Square Feet	Acres	Assessment		
				Land	Building	Total
Savannah Street Properties	City of Boston	98,159	2.25	$2,800		$ 2,800
	Private	47,900	1.09	1,600	6,000	7,600
	Street Area	-	1.03	-	-	-
TOTALS		-	4.37	$4,400	$6,000	$10,400
Orlando Street #1	City of Boston	-	-	-	-	-
	Private	9,867	.23	700	-	700
	Street	-	.12	-	-	-
TOTALS		-	.35	$ 700	-	$ 700
Orlando Street #2	City of Boston	7,278	.16	400	-	400
	Private	21,491	.49	2,300	-	2,300
TOTALS			.65	$2,700	-	$ 2,700
Infill Sites	City of Boston	22,508	.51	600	-	600
TOTALS		22,508	.51	$ 600	-	$ 600

C. Estimated Acquisition Cost

- $16,800 for Savannah Street properties
- $ 3,200 for Orlando Street 2 properties
- Estimates were not made for Orlando Street 1 or Infill sites
- Source: Bob McGovern - extremely rough estimates based on a "windshield" appraisal

D. Structures

Only one structure exists in the above four areas. A new single family residence is located at the corner of Savannah Street and Monterey Street.

E. Topography and Site Location Information

Savannah Street Properties

The site is generally flat but has extensive rock outcroppings and heavy tree growth. In addition, the site is located in the center of an area surrounded by fairly new housing; on the west by single family homes, and on the east by several multi-family apartment structures which have recently been constructed (in a single family zone).

Orlando Street 1

This small site consists of two privately owned parcels separated by a section of a "paper" unimproved street (Monterey Street). If assembled, the site is 0.35 acres in size. Currently, the parcel is being used for off-street parking. No topography problems are evident, but the site is heavily wooded.

Orlando Street 2

This 0.65 acre site is vacant and consists of five privately owned parcels separated by three city-owned parcels. No topography problems are evident, but the site is heavily wooded.

Infill Sites

Three infill sites totalling 0.51 acres in size are located near each other, separated by a new two-family structure and an unimproved street. The three sites are also located between the larger Savannah Street site and the Almont Street Playground. The sites are extremely rocky, either with extensive rock outcroppings or piles or loose rocks.

F. Streets, Utilities

Both Savannah Street and Orlando Street are unimproved between Monterey Street (also unimproved) and Hessinger Street.

A waterline is under Orlando Street, but no other utility lines are under this street or [illegible] Street. However, storm and

F. Streets, Utilities cont.

sanitary sewer lines are within one block so connections could be made if development occurs.

G. Almont Street Playground

The 18-acre Almont Street Playground is located east of and adjacent to the Orlando Street sites and the Infill sites and 120 feet from the Savannah Street site.

H. Development Possibilities

Two alternative development possibilities are proposed:

1. Housing development for families

2. Elementary School for 1,000 students (alternative to old renewal project site)

1. Housing Development

All four areas identified above could be developed for housing. Development above maximum densities permitted by R-.8 zoning district (25.7 u/net res. acre) is not recommended. If the parcels were developed at the maximum permitted, 150 units could be located in this area; 112 units on Savannah Street; 9 units at Orlando Street #1; 17 units at Orlando Street #2 and 12 units at the Infill sites. The housing could accommodate a population of about 530 persons.

2. Elementary School Site

By combining the Savannah Street site with the proposed Infill sites and a portion of unimproved Orlando Street, a 4.8 acre site could be assembled for construction of a 1,000 pupil elementary school. The relatively small school site would be directly adjacent to the 18-acre Almont Street Playground which could be used for school recreation purposes.

The other two Orlando Street sites would not be needed for school or park purposes and could be developed for 26 housing units.

The above land assembly plan would require relocation of one, two-family structure.

2. Elementary School Site cont.

In addition, it would utilize the three sites designated as Infill sites (DS-30, 31 and 32). However, Infill units could be built on other city-owned parcels on Orlando Street. At this point, the Public Facilities Department is reasonably interested in the above site as a school site, particularly because of the excellent location within the proposed attendance area, as well as being adjacent to a large playground. However, more study is needed to determine proper siting.

IV. GENERAL STATEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Mattapan is changing rapidly and major problems are surfacing in the community, solutions to these problems must be determined on an immediate, intermediate and long-range basis. The approach in this study has been to attempt to outline selected public improvements which could be implemented "immediately"; actions which can be taken now to prepare for intermediate improvements; and actions which should be undertaken now to lead to longer term programs.

V. IMMEDIATE PROGRAMS

A. Housing

1. BBURG

The Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (BBURG) is currently providing homeownership mortgages in a large part of Mattapan and Franklin Field areas (See Map II), specifically north of Walk Hill Street and Norfolk Street. However, the program is causing mixed reactions in Mattapan and elsewhere. On the positive side, the program is enabling middle income blacks to leave the ghetto and providing them with a chance for homeownership in other areas. On the negative side, Mattapan residents are saying that the program is "underwriting" block busting and thereby increasing racial tension in the area. In addition, residents point out that since mortgages are limited to $15,000, the effect has been a further decreasing of the value of homes.

If the goal of the Mattapan community is optimistic, that is to achieve an integrated and stable community, special homeownership financing, rehabilitation and counselling services for newcomers must be provided in the area. Without such "tailor made" programs the Jewish community is going to continue to leave Mattapan and black migration is going to continue to increase in the area.

2. 312-115 Certification

As you know, the Planning Department has undertaken a study to determine areas outside renewal and code enforcement areas which could be certified for Section 312 Rehabilitation Loans and Section 115 Grants Programs. The study has designated several areas of the City, including Dorchester, as high priority areas to utilize the Certification Program. More specifically, the area served by BBURG in Franklin Field and Mattapan has been designated as a high priority area within Dorchester (See Map VI). In addition, neighborhoods to the east of Norfolk Street have been designated as second priority and areas south of Walk Hill Street and Norfolk Street have been designated as third priority within Dorchester.

If funds become available in the area, only homeowners will be eligible for loans up to $10,000 and only low-income owners under $3,000 per year will be eligible for the supplementary grants up to $3,000. In Dorchester, over 5,000 families had incomes below $3,000 in 1960. This figure has probably increased in Dorchester particularly in areas adjacent to the Model Cities area.

Although the study was undertaken without the benefit of federal guidelines for these programs, we were able to obtain a draft copy this week. The guidelines state that areas to be certified must be definitely planned for code enforcement or urban renewal within three years. No areas in Dorchester are definitely planned for either program at this time. However, the District Planning effort in this area will probably indicate areas which are in need of such programs.

B. Parks & Recreation

1. Almont Street Playground

The 1968 Urban Beautification Program scheduled $52,000 for improvements here. In addition, a swimming pool costing between $150,000 and $200,000 will be constructed here, under finances approved by the recent Bond Issue.

2. Walker Playground

Improvements totalling $40,000 are scheduled for the 1971 Urban Beautification Program here. Although the playground is in generally good condition, two tennis courts and a field house need rehabilitating. The field house could be converted into a senior citizens center via special funding, if interest develops.

3. Recreation Programs

Intensive recreation programs should be operated at both playgrounds this summer, such as Summerthing.

C. Social Problems

1. Because of the increase in drug use, purse-snatchings, fights and other delinquent incidents, added police protection should be provided in critical areas such as the Lewenberg Junior High School area (after school) and along Blue Hill Avenue.

2. The Lewenberg Junior High School has rapidly become racially imbalanced due to the decreasing white enrollment and extensive bussing of Negroes from Roxbury. The School Committee should be urged to correct this imbalance. Residents in Mattapan claim that the "Negro Community" has launched a definite effort to imbalance the school and residents fear another King School incident here.

VI. INTERMEDIATE PROGRAMS

Although many of the urgent problems are "social" as well as "physical" in nature, there is a definite need to take advantage of development opportunities in Mattapan to make a visible contribution to the improvement and stability of the area. Both of the vacant land areas as well as a deteriorated section in the Blue Hill Avenue - Norfolk Street area are potential redevelopment areas. They are described in more detail below (See Map VII).

A. Former Mattapan Renewal Project Area

1. Proposed Plan

As mentioned before, this 40+ acre area could be developed for a housing development including a 1,000 pupil elementary school with a playground. The highest density housing should be located near Livermore Street and Cummins Highway. Moderate density housing would be located between the highest densities and new single family units which would be compatible with the existing neighborhood. A nine-acre tract in the northeast corner should be reserved for the school and playground. Statistics for the development have been mentioned on page six .

2. Implementation

Although the land cost (estimated at $550,000) is low for the 40+ acre site, development costs would probably be high because of the rocky and uneven terrain. The area could probably qualify

2. Implementation cont.

moderate income family housing (Section 236) and private low-cost housing for the elderly (Section 202) as well as unsubsidized housing, may make a profitable mix for an interested developer. However, a detailed feasibility study will have to be undertaken if development uses provisions of the Chapter 121-A option. The study would have to include an examination of whether or not the acquisition costs are reasonable to permit private construction of Section 236 housing. In addition, the cost of providing public improvements at the site (either by the developer or the City) will have to be determined. In addition, the recommended density will have to be evaluated in terms of the above costs. Increased densities may be required to insure feasibility of the development.

Another option which may be considered, but not recommended is using Urban Renewal. This is not desirable because of the excessive time lag experienced in this program. In addition, there are higher priorities elsewhere in Boston for urban renewal action. A mini urban renewal project for the elderly here would not meet the moderate income family housing needs in this area. Finally, community opposition would probably occur.

The least desirable alternative is to allow development to occur under normal private market conditions. Without adequate subdivision development controls, this would result in haphazard development, even if the area is rezoned according to an overall plan. Development would probably occur on scattered sites and at densities much higher than planned through granting of excessive variances which has been the practice in this area. In addition, the City would be obliged to pay for all public improvements and would only do so after development occurs, not before. However, under this option, the Public Facilities Department could still obtain necessary land via eminent domain for the construction of the new school.

Alternative Plan

If housing development is determined to be infeasible here because of cost or lack of interest, the area should be reserved for a site for an educational park complex. A special investigation of city-wide school needs should be undertaken to see if this large tract of vacant land would be an appropriate site for new school facilities. If so, the Public Facilities Department should acquire all the parcels and hold for appropriate development.

B. Savannah Street - Orlando Street Site

1. Proposed Plan

As mentioned before, all four of the vacant sites should be rezoned R-.8 to encourage development of the site, either by a 121 A Corporation or, if necessary, through the private market. It is highly unlikely that the City will make the required public improvements to the streets and utilities to promote development under the present S-.5 zoning or without an interested developer. In addition, apartments in this area should be for families not the elderly as the site is too far from public transportation. Further details of this proposal are found on page ten of this report.

C. Blue Hill Avenue - Norfolk Street

1. Proposal

A 256-unit elderly housing project is proposed for a 3.2 acre site on Blue Hill Avenue between Babson Street and Wilmore Street. The existing site includes 21 businesse establishments, 13 dwelling units, Rabbi Korff's Rectory and Temple Hatikvah (20,000 square feet) and a dead end public alley - Norfolk Court. Estimated acquisition cost of the properties, including the temple, is $165,000.

Most of the commercial establishments are in a deteriorating condition, but most of the housing structures are in fair condition. Buildings in worst condition are the Temple Hatikvah and a housing unit fronting Babson Street.

The elderly housing development could include limited commercial uses on the ground floor as the site fronts Blue Hill Avenue, convenient to other shops, public transportation and the Walker Playground.

2. Implementation

The properties could possibly be purchased under the provision of a 121 A Corporation and the housing could be developed under Section 202-housing for the elderly sponsored by a non-profit corporation. The Rabbi could form such a corporation to qualify for both the 121 A option and the 202 Program.

If the properties cannot qualify for a 121 A Corporation, a mini urban renewal project would be the second alternative. Under this option, the Boston Housing Authority would be the developer.

2. Implementation cont.

However, this option would not guarantee that the housing could be occupied by Mattapan residents, particularly the Jewish elderly.

A detailed study by our Development Department should determine which, if any, of the above alternatives is feasible.

VII. LONG-RANGE PROGRAMS

The preceding recommendations may have a positive effect on the Mattapan community, if the further detailing of these and other efforts are coordinated with a representative group from Mattapan. This is especially important because as pointed out earlier, Mattapan's problems are not really linked to the lack of physical development; but because of the social changes which have occured rapidly for which the community was not prepared.

Further planning in the Mattapan - Franklin Field area should be done with the direct involvement of a special subcommittee of the yet to be formed Dorchester Advisory Committee as part of the Dorchester District Planning Program. Their involvement is crucial in determining the future plans of the area, particularly in such matters as the use of the Neighborhood Development Program in this area. This latter program may be the most effective way to deal with the problems in this area on both a short-range and long-range basis.

In sum, a comprehensive yet hard hitting approach to solving physical and social problems in this area is the major goal of the District Planning Program in this area.

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